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ABSTRACT

The mission of the National Board for Professional Teaching Standards (NBPTS) is to advance the quality of teaching and learning by: maintaining high, rigorous standards for what accomplished teachers should know and be able to do; providing a national voluntary system certifying teachers who meet these standards; and advocating related education reforms to integrate NBPTS standards. The five core NBPTS propositions are: (1) teachers are committed to students and their learning (e.g., teachers understand how students develop and learn and treat students equitably); (2) teachers know the subjects they teach and how to teach those subjects to students (e.g., teachers command specialized knowledge of how to convey a subject and generate multiple paths to knowledge); (3) teachers are responsible for managing and monitoring student learning (e.g., teachers use varied instructional resources and regularly assess student progress); (4) teachers think systematically about their practice and learn from experience (e.g., teachers read, question, and are willing to try new things, and they respect cultural differences); and (5) teachers are members of learning communities (e.g., teachers collaborate with colleagues and take advantage of community resources). Research evidence on each of the five propositions is included. (SM)

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"The bottom line is clear—whatever else in the education structure we change—more challenging standards, different tests, new governance structures—our nation's efforts to lift student achievement will fail unless we have high quality teaching in every classroom."

Investing in Teaching

National Alliance of Business

Moving Education Forward...

through National Board Certification©

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Education. It has been, and is, the cornerstone of America's success. But increasingly, parents, policymakers, community and business leaders are asking, "Is there a way we can do a better job of teaching our next generation?"

The National Board for Professional Teaching Standards, (NBPTS) has an answer. NBPTS is rooted in the belief that the single most important action this country can take to improve schools and student learning is to strengthen teaching. Accomplished teachers make the critical difference not only to individual futures but also to America's future.

National Board Certification, offered through NBPTS, is a nationally accepted sign of quality in the teaching profession and offers a nationwide standard for evaluating and encouraging quality teaching. Increasingly, lawmakers, school districts and parents are urging policies that encourage experienced teachers to go through the process because they recognize the power certification has to transform teaching, learning and schools. It offers a way to recognize and reward the accomplished teachers that are needed to build competitive, world-class schools and workforce.

Teachers who are National Board Certified outperformed their peers on every one of 13 key dimensions of good teaching and the differences were statistically significant on 11 of them. In addition, students of National Board Certified Teachers were twice as likely as students with non-National Board Certified Teachers to have a deep understanding of content.

Bond, L. et al. (2000) *The Certification System of the National Board for Professional Teaching Standards: A Construct and Consequential Validity Study*. Center for Educational Research and Evaluation: University of North Carolina at Greensboro.

"[National Board Certified] Teachers are examples of teaching excellence and will play a vital role in preparing our children for their future."

U.S. Senator Bill Frist, TN

"Having a caring, competent, and highly qualified teacher in every classroom is the goal of all of us, and National Board Certification of teachers is one path to reach this goal. Today, 49 states and more than 475 local school districts have endorsed this goal by enacting legislative and policy actions creating incentives and recognition for National Board Certification."

Anne L. Bryant, Executive Director
National School Boards Association

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National Board Certification—A Research Based Process

National Board Certification, a voluntary process, provides a choice for experienced teachers who seek advanced certification and validation of their skills. National Board Certification measures a teacher's practice against high and rigorous research-based standards. The process is an extensive series of performance-based assessments that includes teaching portfolios, student work samples, videotapes and thorough analyses of the teacher's classroom teaching and student learning. In addition, teachers must successfully complete a series of written exercises that probe the depth of their subject-matter knowledge. As a result, National Board Certified Teachers have demonstrated that they know their content area, how to teach it, and how to reach all children, leaving none behind—they are highly accomplished teachers.

NBPTS began in 1987, following recommendations on improving the teaching profession from the Carnegie Reports "A Nation at Risk" and "A Nation Prepared." The 63-member Board—representing teachers (the majority), other educators, elected officials, parents and business persons—has developed standards for 24 certificate areas in different subject matter areas and at different developmental levels, all centered around five core propositions.

The National Board work is based on long established research that identifies and recognizes sound educational practices resulting in improved student achievement. Additionally, NBPTS has commissioned more than 140 studies, reports and papers on the value of the National Board Certification process, as well as its standards and assessments. NBPTS has subjected itself to a higher standard of research and validation than any other certifying board in the United States; and it continues its research agenda through a recently launched aggressive and well-funded research initiative to obtain further knowledge and evidence of the most effective ways to increase student achievement and improve our schools.

The National Board's mission is to advance the quality of teaching and learning by:

Maintaining high and rigorous standards for what accomplished teachers should know and be able to do,

Providing a national voluntary system certifying teachers who meet these standards, and

Advocating related education reforms to integrate National Board Certification in American education and to capitalize on the expertise of National Board Certified Teachers.

"It's [National Board] a very rigorous process. It's the equivalent of passing the bar exam for a lawyer or the medical exam for a doctor."

Merle Price,
Deputy Superintendent for Instruction
L.A. Unified School District, CA

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The Five Core Propositions: The Foundation for Excellence

The NBPTS research-based core propositions—examples of research are listed below—are expressions of the effectiveness, knowledge, skills, dispositions and commitments of the accomplished teacher. NBPTS standards for each field and developmental level are centered on the propositions, and have direct applicability in the classroom.

Core Proposition 1:

Teachers are committed to students and their learning.

What this means: National Board Certified Teachers (NBCTs) know that all students can learn. NBCTs recognize individual differences in their students and adjust their practices accordingly. They treat students equitably, knowing that each student needs different tools and support to learn effectively. NBCTs mission extends beyond developing the cognitive capacity of their students. Teachers are also concerned with their students' self-concept, with their motivation, with the effects of learning on peer relationships, and with the development of character, aspiration and civic virtues.

What it looks like in the classroom: NBCTs get to know each student in their classrooms as individuals. To respond to individual differences, teachers must know many things about the particular students they teach: Alex has a stutter, Maria loves science fiction, Toby is anxious about mathematics, Marcus is captivated by jazz. Accomplished teachers also know much more—whom their students go home to every night, how they have previously performed on standardized tests, what sparks their interest. This kind of specific understanding is used constantly in deciding how to best tailor instruction.

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What research shows:

- ☐ Expert teachers know the abilities, experiences and backgrounds of students and the facility in which they teach. *Housner L.D. & Griffey D.C (1985). Teacher cognition: differences in planning and interactive decision making between experienced and inexperienced teachers. Research Quarterly for Exercise and Sport, 56, 45-54.*
- ☐ Expert teachers know their students personally in order to know what variations are needed in teaching. *Berliner, D.C. (1987, April). Expert and novice interpretations of classroom data. Paper presented at the annual meeting of the American Educational Research Association, Washington, D.C.*
- ☐ Expert teachers have "extensive, accessible knowledge that is organized for use in teaching; and knowledge of the political & social context in which teaching occurs." *(Sternberg, R.J. & Horavath, J.A. (1995). A prototype of expert teaching. Educational Researcher. 24(6), 9-17.*

"It is clear that teachers certified by NBPTS are dedicated and talented individuals who genuinely care about their profession ... and I have found them to be at the top of their profession. Most importantly, they care about their students."

U.S. Senator Larry Craig, Idaho

"The students, schools and communities in Kansas are the beneficiaries of these [National Board Certified] teachers' dedication and achievement."

Gov. Bill Graves, KS

Core Proposition

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Core Proposition 2:

Teachers know the subjects they teach and how to teach those subjects to students.

What this means: Accomplished teachers have mastery over all the subject matter content they are responsible for teaching—as well as a deep and rich contextual knowledge and an understanding of the history, structure and real-life applications of those subjects. NBCTs have skill and experience in teaching these subjects; they are familiar with the preconceptions and skill gaps students typically bring to this particular discipline, and fluently use multiple, diverse teaching strategies to teach for understanding.

How it looks in the classroom: NBCTs are passionate about the subjects they teach! They work tenaciously with students of all abilities and interest levels—and demonstrate their conviction that *everyone* can do algebra, or write a persuasive letter. They are not afraid to try something new or unusual; what counts is capturing interest, engaging students, and reaching for depth and excellence. An NBCT finds alternate teaching methods and strategies when the student is struggling with a subject.

"We [Maryland] are at a point where we are working harder than ever to ensure that highly qualified teachers are in every classroom. The work that the National Board for Professional Teaching Standards is doing in this area is exceptional and greatly benefits our nation's students."

Nancy S. Grasmick

State Superintendent of Schools, MD

"National Board Certification is a great way for teachers to demonstrate their dedication to the profession and their desire for excellence in education. The program helps school boards recognize and award merit."

Grace Mynatt, Chair
Cabarrus County Board of Education
Concord, NC

"I reached students I wasn't reaching any other way."

Mark Platts, NBCT
Timmonsville, SC

Core Proposition

What research shows:

- ☐ Expert teachers are more able to deal with the multidimensionality of the classroom. *Sabers, D.S., Cushing, K.S., & Berliner, D.C. (1991). Differences among teachers in a task characterized by simultaneity, multidimensionality, and immediacy. American Educational Research Journal, 28(1), 63-88.*

- ☐ Expert teachers have more understanding of the how and why of student success and identify and use the most relevant information in decision-making. *Leinhardt, G. (1983). Novice and expert knowledge of individual student's achievement. Educational Psychology, 18(3), 165-179.*

- ☐ Expert teachers set challenging student goals and structure situations so students can achieve them. *Locke, E.A., & Latham, GP.P. (1992). A theory of goal setting and task performance. Englewood Cliffs, NJ: Prentice Hall.*

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Core Proposition 3:

Teachers are responsible for managing and monitoring student learning.

"One of the beautiful things about National Board [Certification] is its focus on student learning ... These are [teachers] who will boost student learning and contribute toward narrowing the achievement gap."

Elizabeth Burmaster
State Superintendent
of Public Instruction
Wisconsin

What it Means: NBCTs deliver instruction effectively, in a climate expressly created for maximum learning. They use multiple and varied instructional resources—print, media, audio and human. These teachers move fluently through a range of instructional techniques, keeping students engaged and focused. They are expert assessors, and know how to keep students motivated.

How it Looks in the Classroom: Each hour is different! You will see students in multiple configurations—working in pairs or alone, enthusiastically and exuberantly, using technology or creating "by hand." The classroom climate is warm and accepting—students understand that mistakes are opportunities for learning, and every child makes a contribution. NBCTs assess by observing, analyzing student work, informally evaluating and formally testing—and when the results show gaps, new instructional techniques are tried.

What research shows:

- Expert teachers use different strategies for solving problems—they see situations in broader contexts, are flexible and use information that appears meaningless to others. *Larkin, J.H., McDermott, J., Simon, D.P., & Simon, H.A. (1980). Expert and novice performance in solving physics problems. Science, 208, 1335-1342.*

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"Throughout the district, we found that students generally scored higher with teachers who are National Board Certified compared to students with non-board certified teachers."

John Deasy, Superintendent
Santa Monica-Malibu Unified
School District, CA

- Expert teachers problem solve with respect to each student's performance in the class. *Houser, L.D., & Griffey, D.C. (1985). Teacher cognition: differences in planning and interactive decision making between experienced and inexperienced teachers. Research Quarterly for Exercise and Sport, 56, 45-53.*

- Expert teachers engage all students in tasks and feedback, and monitor their progress. *Clarridge, P. (1989, March) Alternative perspectives for analyzing expertise in teaching. Paper presented at the annual meeting of the American Education Research Association, San Francisco, CA.*

- Expert teachers can detect when students lose interest and are not understanding. *Berliner, D.C. (1988). The development of expertise in pedagogy. Paper presented at the annual meeting of the American Association of Colleges for Teacher Education, New Orleans, LA.*

"I am convinced that the process promotes improved teaching practices. In turn, student learning is improved."

Mendel Steward, Superintendent
Pickens County Schools, SC

Core Proposition

Core Proposition 4:

Teachers Think Systematically about Their Practice and Learn from Experience

What it Means: NBCTs model what it means to be an educated person—they read, they question, they are curious about and willing to try new things. They are familiar with learning theories and instructional strategies and stay abreast of current issues in American education. They respect the cultural and family differences students bring to their classroom. These accomplished teachers critically examine their practice on a regular basis, to deepen knowledge, expand their repertoire of skills, and incorporate new findings into their practice.

How It Looks in the Classroom: NBCTs use today's results to structure lessons for tomorrow. They have mastered the art of analysis: they spend time, every day, thinking about what went well, and what needs to be re-done—always with specific learning goals for these particular students in mind. NBCTs have flexible and adaptable lesson plans! They are excited about new ideas and challenges in their field, and thrive on thoughtful change. They love learning new ideas with and from their students. They strive to teach for understanding and mastery, not mere memorization or coverage. They make it clear to their students and colleagues that they care, deeply, about being top-notch teachers.

"You can't make progress in student achievement unless you have excellent teachers. So we have placed a major emphasis on encouraging our staff to become National Board Certified Teachers. That's how we've increased student achievement, and we have the gains to prove it."

Dr. Daniel A. Domenech,
Superintendent,
Fairfax County Public Schools,
Fairfax, VA

Core Proposition

"National Board Certification made the content meaningful. If it wasn't relevant, meaningful, didn't stick to their brains like velcro, it didn't work for me ... The Board does a fabulous job of getting us to deliver content more effectively, making learning more joyful for students."

Jack Schneider, NBCT
Omak, WA

What research shows:

- ☐ Expert teachers adopt a deep approach to learning that has consequential effects on what and how students learn. *Biggs, J.B. (1987). The Study Process Questionnaire (SPQ) users' manual. Hawthorn, Victoria: ACER.*

- ☐ Expert teachers evaluate possible strategies while getting further data and knowledge, thus prioritizing and reprioritizing intervention strategies. *Leinhardt, G. & Green, J (1986). The cognitive skill of teaching. Journal of Educational Psychology, 78, 75-95.*

- ☐ Expert teachers display a passion for teaching and a sense of responsibility; they inspire students to become more excited about learning. *Berliner, D.C. (1988, Feb) The development of expertise in pedagogy. Paper presented at the annual meeting of the American Association of Colleges for Teacher Education, New Orleans, LA.*

Core Proposition 5:

Teachers are Members of Learning Communities

What It Means: NBCTs are active participants in collaborations with others to improve student learning. They work effectively with their teacher-colleagues in departments, buildings and districts, and act as teacher leaders in policy, curriculum and staff development projects, locally and beyond their school district. They actively seek partnerships with community groups and businesses. These accomplished teachers work creatively with their students' parents and other family members to improve learning opportunities.

How it looks in the classroom: The door is always open in an NBCT's classroom—open for family members, teacher-colleagues, and members of the community. Students are used to visitors, and welcome business leaders and local speakers, who have been discovered and invited by their teacher. Older and younger students may drop by to tutor or share a special skill, and families feel respected and valued as partners. Students know that their teacher works closely with other teachers and staff because those people are also familiar faces and are as likely to teach the math lesson as the "regular" teacher. There are regular and innovative means of communication with parents and family—and channels for parents to speak openly to teachers.

What research shows:

- ☐ Parental involvement positively affects eighth-grade student achievement. *Keith, T.Z., & Keith, P.B. (1993) School Psychology Review, 22(3), 474-496. EJ486048.*

"McNeill Elementary is like a home away from home—not only for my children, but for me as well. They welcome me as a friend when I walk through the door and help me be a part of my kids' school life. Nothing means more to me as a parent than knowing that my kid's teacher considers me a partner in the educational process."

Antony Norman, Parent
Bowling Green, KY

"The more expertise we bring into the classroom door, the better our kids are going to be. We need to be looking at ways to go in that direction. Maybe corporations can begin to sponsor a given number of teachers in their communities for this level of certification, as a way of getting involved."

Dr. Leviticus Roberts, Businessman
Atlanta, GA

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"The National Board helped me to realize the importance of families as allies in educating their children."

Beth Poole, NBCT
Cumming, GA

"The connection with parents is highly stressed. We know as teachers we only have the students for a certain part of the day. They have to go home and practice what we've taught, and the parents have them for the rest of their lives."

Susie Chow, NBCT
Los Angeles, CA

"NBPTS has raised the standard of the teaching profession. The business community will continue to recognize and support the National Board because it succeeds in advancing the profession and in helping our children become the productive citizens we need them to be."

Kerry Killinger, Chairman, President and CEO
Washington Mutual Insurance Companies

- Hispanic parental involvement increases student learning. *Schribner, J.D., Young, MD., & Pedroza, A. (1999). Lessons from high-performing Hispanic schools: Creating learning communities (pp.36-60). New York, NY: Teachers College Press.*

- Business and community involvement increases student achievement. *Hughes, K.L., Bailey, T.R., & Mechur, M.J. (2001). School-to-work: Making a difference in education. A research report to America. New York, NY: Institute on Education and the Economy, Teachers College, Columbia University. ED4493654.*

Core Proposition

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How do NBCTs address key educational issues?

Here's what policymakers, educational leaders and parents are saying about National Board Certification.

NBCTs improve student learning for all children.

"The most important variable in improving student learning is the teacher."

Dan Fallon
Carnegie Foundation

"We have allied with NBPTS because we support high quality teaching that provides immediate benefits to students in the classroom."

Sue Zurvalec, President
American Association of School Personnel Administrators

NBCTs meet high and rigorous standards in subject area and teaching performance in the same manner that students meet state standards.

"The best way I know to improve student learning is to improve the standards for educators—they are the ones who make it happen."

Dick Niemyer, Superintendent
Omak Schools, WA

- *"Teachers who attempt the demanding National Board assessments have signaled their willingness to hold themselves to the highest professional standard."*

Reg Weaver, President
National Education Association

- *"National Board Certification is an important part of our effort to improve student achievement and professionalize teaching."*

Sandra Feldman, President
American Federation of Teachers

NBCTs understand and know how to teach to standards and know how to individualize that instruction to every student.

- *"She uses different strategies ... Her strategies have helped not only my son but many children in this classroom who would not have excelled if they were in a regular class environment."*

Susanna Lovermi, Parent
Dade County, FL

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D *"What it really says is I'm holding my students up to standards they'll find anywhere else in the country."*

Rusty Curtis, NBCT
Social Studies and Government
Ripley Union Lewis
Huntington High School, KY

NBCTs tend to remain in the classroom and in their profession.

D *"Attracting new teachers and retaining the talented teachers already living in Florida remains a top priority for Florida. National Board Certification is one of the best ways we can both reward our talented teachers and meet new state and federal mandates for quality teaching."*

Gov. Jeb Bush, FL

D *"Supporting [National Board Certification] is one way I can encourage our best teachers to continue working with students."*

Julie Mikuta
School Board Member
District of Columbia

D *"National Board Certification ... aids our retention efforts by allowing accomplished, experienced teachers an opportunity for recognition and additional compensation while staying in the classroom where we need them most."*

Gov. Paul Patton, KY
Chair, National Governors Association

NBCTs as teacher leaders help raise the quality of teaching in schools and districts as school improvement plans are implemented across America.

D *"With high expectations and greater public accountability for academic achievement, it is imperative that schools are staffed with the best trained, most capable faculty possible. It is through National Board Certification that principals can best support and develop the teachers in their schools, and thus greatly improve teaching and learning."*

Dr. Gerald N. Tirozzi
Executive Director
National Association of
Secondary School Principals

D *"The power of National Board Certification is that it not only provides the foundation to develop and maintain a focus on quality teaching and instruction and the development of a professional and collegial learning community in our buildings for all staff; but it also enhances the opportunity to engage NBCT staff as emerging leaders of school reform that is meaningful and sustainable."*

Paul McMahan, Principal
Patrick Henry High School
Minneapolis, MN

D *"National Board Certified Teachers set a standard of excellence in teaching and are emerging as strong leaders in their schools and communities."*

Sylvia Auton, Director
Staff Development, Fairfax County, VA

D *"There is no greater priority than to ensure that there is a qualified teacher in every classroom to help our children reach their full potential, and I applaud the NBPTS for their work in helping us reach that goal."*

U.S. Senator Edward Kennedy, MA

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hen I entered this program, I heard scores of testimonies from NBCTs saying that I would never be the same teacher, or even person, when I completed this endeavor. Truthfully, I scoffed at this. I was, or so I thought, a great teacher and could not imagine a program that would or even could change me so dramatically.

"I was wrong. I now look at my teaching differently and more thoroughly every single day. My views of children, their parents, and each individual situation go directly to my heart. I search myself, and yes, I search all around me, pulling from each and everyone I run into for ways to ensure each child experiences success and reaches his or her potential.

"The journey through this program will forever by outweighed by the outcome of my growth of my love for teaching and my desire for each of my children in my class to be the best they can be.

"Thank you for providing a program to the teachers of our country that challenges us, prods us, stretches us, and then assures us that we make the greatest difference of all."

Peggy Kessler
NBCT
Dry Prong, LA

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PROFESSIONAL TEACHING STANDARDS

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